



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## LEAVES FROM THE HISTORY OF THE LAST DECADE—1880-'90.

---

EDWIN BAXTER.

---

I came to Los Angeles in August, 1881. During the months before the winter season I noticed the almost continuous smoke of small fires in the open fields toward the mountains, caused by the burning of straw and stubble of the wheat and barley fields. The country looked bare, with no apparent sustenance for the numerous bands of sheep that roamed the open fields, except the bulbous roots of grass and small grains, and it seemed improvident to destroy the straw and stubble. For one or two, or more, years there had been less than the usual amount of rain. The weather continued dry until late in January. One day (I think it was in the early days of February) a party of us rode out into the brush land some twenty miles, beyond the San Gabriel River, toward the mountains. It was nearly dark when we returned to the city, and so cold we were fearfully chilled. The next day it commenced snowing, and in a couple of hours the ground was thoroughly whitened. The snow soon melted and disappeared in and about the city. The old inhabitants said such a thing was previously unknown here, and some who were born here and grown to be men and women declared they had never before seen snow near enough to touch it. It is possible they had made no record of the last snow storm, for some others who have not been here so long have different recollections; but the fact remains that we have not since seen the ground white in Los Angeles. Out near Colton and Riverside that snow came until it was from six to ten inches deep, and fell so thickly on the backs of the sheep, and so soon melted, that they were chilled in the cold nights that followed, and, being weak and famished for lack of the straw and feed that had been burning day after day all the fall, thousands of them died. That winter and that snow storm mark an era in sheep-raising in Southern California. It was reported that before another winter one-half the sheep in San Diego, Los Angeles and other southern counties were sold and driven away or slaughtered, or both. It was not so bad as in the dry year, or season of 1863-'4. I was told by J. F. Cooper of Santa Barbara that in that notable season he removed his flocks and herds from Los Nietos and vicinity—the most desirable region in Los Angeles county for stock-raising—to the Santa Rosa Rancho, in Santa Barbara county, on account of the drought, and that he actually cut

the heads off three thousand lambs — *to save their lives!* Also that he sold the finest wethers for 10 cents per head for the same reason. Eighty-one and two was not so bad here, and, in fact, we had the later rain. Being a "tenderfoot," and owning no land, I did not share the trepidation of those who did, but I remember, as an illustration of the somewhat general distrust, that of a man who sold his barley field for \$600 and ten days after, a copious rain having fallen, bought it back for \$2000. A banker in the city had a hay ranch down toward the ocean. He wanted some hay for his horses, and told the man in charge of his ranch to bring him a load, but added: "If you can sell it on the way for \$25 per ton do so." After six or seven days he started to the farm to see why his hay did not come, and met his man with a load. He had started with a load every day, and sold it before reaching town for \$25 or more.

The prickly pear cactus was quite commonly found in this city ten years ago, and this might as well be recorded, for a few years later it will be a thing of the past and pass into history, in the city at least. It was one of those strange things first noticed by a stranger from the northeast. Eastern people called it an overgrown "old hen's chickens." Shortly after our arrival, walking down Fifth street with my daughter, we came to one of these strange trees. We had heard that the fruit was good to eat when ripe, after the prickles and rind were off. We concluded to try it, and I picked a pear. I have seen many of them since, on high and low stems, from the brush land near the foothills to the top of the mountains of Catalina Island, and I dare not say they are *not* good eating. I am certain they are good *picking*, for one of them, whatever its size, is a handful, and it takes a long time to pick even one. I am sure I was at least two or three days picking that first prickly pear, and in picking out and descanting (pleasantly, of course) on the fine points inherent in and upon the fruit. After such an experience the story that "Peter Prangle, the prickly, prangly pear picker, picked three pecks of prickly, prangly pears," means more than a lesson in articulation.

We first took rooms at the Hammond, since named the Makara House and several other names, situated between Third and Fourth street on Main, where the new Turnverein block is now being built. That was then away beyond the outskirts of the business portion of the city. Persons then residents remember the eight-sided building just north of that house on Main street. It was called the "Round House," and has but lately been removed. It was then used as a private school house. The yard or grounds back of it, extending to Spring street, were covered so thickly with a great variety of fruit and other trees and shrubs one could scarcely see through them. At

the west, along Spring street, nearly or quite the width of two lots, was a row of those prickly pear cactus trees, from ten to fifteen or more feet high, and many of the trunks from six to twelve inches in diameter, and the thick, fleshy leaves were so closely interlaced as to be as impenetrable as any hedge.

And this is the story they told us of that garden or orchard: The owner had planted it with all manner of fruits, trees, plants and shrubs with intent to make it a veritable "Garden of Eden," and that is what he named it. He had erected there statues of men and women, Adam and Eve, and I don't know how many beasts, but among them was "the old serpent," Satan himself. And he had peopled, or intended to people, the garden with all manner of beasts, birds and creeping things—whether living or in marble I am not informed. But, like many others of large ideas and plans, before as well as since, his finances were not equal to his purposes, and he resorted to that un-Eden-like makeshift, covering the garden with a mortgage. This was too much of a load for even the Garden of Eden to carry. Whether the new "old serpent" had already tempted Eve to her fall was not related, but he or his prototype had a "grip" on the garden itself, and the owner could not pay the mortgage. It was finally foreclosed, and the garden was sold on a very modern California plan. This was a sad day for the proprietor of this modern Garden of Eden. He dug graves in the earth of the garden and buried all the statues—Adam, Eve, the serpent and the rest—and he renamed the garden "Paradise Lost." Such, we were told, was the condition of that little, modern paradise when first we saw it. But the time for redemption had not yet expired, there was still "a day of grace" and the "lord of the manor" had not lost hope. With the little oil still left in his lamp he was directing all his energies to obtain money to purchase a redemption. Already he had in his mind—if not actually engraved on marble—the new device to put over the gate, "Paradise Regained." Sad to relate, he failed. He died a few years later, no doubt of a broken heart. Perhaps this tale should not go into the archives of this Historical Society in all its details, but I am assured it is "founded on facts."

One of the events of the last decade which those who were here will not forget, was the rainy season of 1883-4. The early winter months were dry. On the first day of February, 1884, it was raining softly nearly all day. We had wet weather from that time until late in April, not a little in May, and rain fell every month in that year. On or after the 20th day of May snow was on the nearer mountains and hills, and old snow was still seen on the distant peaks until late in July. In the great flood of that year forty-three houses

were moved from their places in this city, on the low lands near the river, and vineyards and orchards were swept away. All below Alameda street was under water at one time from two to three inches to several feet deep. Some of the houses were carried a considerable distance down the river, and two or three persons were drowned in the city and vicinity. In 1886 a sudden storm caused Los Angeles River to overflow its banks to almost as great an extent for a few hours; but that was a sudden freshet, caused, it was said, by a cloud burst. Several times during that rainy season of 1884 the mud and filth along Main and Spring streets, at the centre of business, was piled in heaps, to be carted away the next day; and when the next day dawned it would be found leveled almost like the surface of a lake over the street, occasioned by the pour-down in the night. There were no paved streets and but few sidewalks in the city at that time, and the safest way for a pedestrian to climb to the top of the first line of hills during a storm was to walk on the cobble stones with which the gutters at the sides of the streets were paved.

Here let me say for Southern California, that, having from time to time before coming here heard and read about the "rainy season" in California, I had something of a picture in my mind of what it was or should be, and the spring of 1884 is the only rainy season I have seen in the last twelve years which corresponds to that picture.

There were many customs rife in 1880 and later that have since become but memories of the past. I took an office in Temple Block early in 1882. On one side was a township justice's court, on the other the city justice's court. Just across Market street, in the old court house, were held the two departments of the superior court. The custom then prevailed of calling into court any suitor, attorney or witness who failed to appear when his case was called, by shouting his name, three times repeated, from the nearest window. Generally, nearly every hour of the day, or oftener, of six days in the week, some one or more names would be called three times from a window in that block or from the other side of the street. On some days the names of some of the younger attorneys would be heard with such frequency as to suggest a "put up job" of advertising. Sometimes these calls created no little amusement. One day a court officer screamed from the window nearest my open office door: "John W. Horner, Esq., John W. Horner, Esq., John W. Horner, Esq." The words of the third call had scarcely left his lips when from another window at the corner of the block came, in the clear tones of a young law student: "Gone round the corner a square, gone round the corner a square, gone round the corner a square." This custom has

passed away—gone into desuetude, and is even now almost forgotten.

The common council (I beg the pardon of my friend Robinson, the very efficient city clerk of that period, who would never permit the use of the word "common" as a prefix to the title of the city legislature), the city council, "*Muy Ilustre Ayuntamiento*," met in the room in the southeast corner of the second floor of the Temple Block—the same room in which this Historical Society was organized. I frequently attended their sessions—always held in the evening, when a person in the back row of benches could but little more than distinguish the features of the members through the thick tobacco smoke. There was no carpet on the floor, but notwithstanding the presence of numerous cuspidors, it would scarcely be correct to say the floor was bare. And very frequently at these sessions there were refined women present—having some matter of humane or personal interest to present—women who would almost as soon have tolerated a mouse as a single cigar in their apartments at home, yet who would sit for hours waiting to have their case taken up beyond that thickness of darkness and mingled bad tobacco and foul breaths. If there is one thing more than others that indicates the advancement of civilization in the West, it is the banishment of tobacco from city council rooms and public halls.

I will mention one other custom that used to trouble us until we were used to it. It was the night fire alarm—three pistol shots in succession. It was a long time before we ceased to listen for a cry of "murder" instead of the rattle of the fire engines immediately after being startled from sleep by the "one, two, three" of the policeman's revolver.

The wonderful boom of Los Angeles and Southern California began and ended between 1881 and 1889, and really occupied all those years. A brief, partial but spicy history of that cyclone has already been presented by Prof. Guinn, and has a place in our Annual of 1890. A separate paper might be written upon each of many separate subjects connected with and affected by the boom. The schools (public and private), the churches, the banks (every projected city or village had one or more, present or prospective), the street railroads (horse, cable and electric), the street pavements (all or nearly all of which have been laid since 1885), and many other matters, not excepting the old, every night cries of the Mexican tamale vender: "*Tamales, calientes, aqui.*" These tamales have now given way to the base imitations of the northern invader.

The Protestant churches here in 1881 were the Methodists (First, German and Trinity South), First Presbyterian (in a building now used as a dwelling, but then as school house, next south of the First

Methodist, on Broadway, the Baptist in Good Templars' Hall, the Christian on Temple street, the Episcopalian at corner of New High and Temple streets, the Congregational on New High street, north of Temple street. Not a commodious, convenient house among them, unless it was the First Methodist. Within three months after I came I visited each of these at least once, being a regular attendant of one. Except the First Methodist and the Presbyterian there were sometimes regular services in each of them (especially in the evening), in which the congregation was not over fifty, and in several of them it was below twenty-five on some occasions. Before the end of 1885 each of these churches—denominations—had built and fairly filled the spacious edifices now occupied by them, which seat from six hundred to fifteen hundred or more. And some of the new organizations exceed the old in numbers at this time. The City Directory for 1892 gives the names and location of fifty-five Protestant churches and congregations. Among these are sixteen Methodist, ten Presbyterian, six Congregational, five Baptist, five German, and one each of Swedish, Welsh and Chinese churches. The Roman Catholic Church, being the oldest here, was in 1881 represented by the old "Church of our Lady of the Angels," near the plaza, and the cathedral "St. Vibiana," on Main street. That denomination now has congregations and costly school buildings north, south, east and west, in the city. The Jewish Tabernacle remains as it was in 1881, and has its regular services.

An interesting chapter might be written upon the history and decay of the old adobe structures, many of which were prominent land marks in the city ten years ago, but have now disappeared. Like the long adobe row on the corner of Spring and Franklin streets, the very center of business, which was occupied for the jailor's residence, with the jail yard in the rear, the police headquarters, the city clerk's office and for other public uses, until 1885. This would properly include a longer period than the decade from 1880 to 1890, and can be better treated by an older resident.